

**FACULTY OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA**

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**STUDENTS' CHOICES OF UNIVERSITY FROM CONSUMER
BEHAVIOR PERSPECTIVES: A CASE STUDY OF UUM
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

Prepared by:

**JAMILAH SAMSUDIN
(Matric. No. 83913)**

Prepared for:

**PROF. DATO' DR. MOHD. SALLEH HJ. DIN
FACULTY OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

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in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree
Masters of Science (Management)
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By:
Jamilah Samsudin
(Matric. No. 83913)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the decision-making process of students in choosing a university for an undergraduate study and its relationship with the factors that influence the pursuit of higher education, motivation to search and perceive the criteria in choosing university. Respondents were randomly selected from among the first year undergraduate students at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), the only university specializing in management programs in Malaysia. The theoretical framework of this study was modified from Brennan's model (Brennan, 2001). The study found that the decision-making capability of students based on the uncertainty orientation where students actively seek information about higher learning institutions face the risk of an ambiguous future. The study also found that students' pursuit of higher education is much influenced by their peers. Their motivation to search a higher learning institution is mostly motivated by the purchasing decision involvement or their level of involvement and sense of importance about purchase decision. The findings also revealed that the top five criteria perceived by students in choosing a university are education facilities, job placement programs, degree program offered, safety on campus, and relevance of program to a chosen career. The findings of the study benefit the university especially the education marketers and also the policy makers in designing their effective marketing campaign and promotional activities to attract students to choose the university.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah untuk melihat keupayaan membuat keputusan oleh pelajar dalam memilih universiti bagi meneruskan pengajian di peringkat ijazah pertama dan hubungannya dengan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pelajar untuk meneruskan pengajian, motivasi untuk mencari maklumat dan kriteria pemilihan sesebuah universiti. Responden kajian dipilih secara rawak dan terdiri daripada pelajar-pelajar tahun pertama Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), satu-satunya universiti di Malaysia yang khusus dalam bidang pengurusan. Kerangka teoretikal yang digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah modifikasi kepada model yang dibina oleh Brennan (Brennan, 2001). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan keupayaan membuat keputusan oleh pelajar dipengaruhi oleh ketidaktentuan orientasi disebabkan risiko yang akan dihadapi dan kesamaran tentang masa depan. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa pengaruh rakan sebaya banyak mempengaruhi pelajar untuk meneruskan pengajian. Motivasi untuk mencari maklumat mengenai universiti pula banyak dipengaruhi oleh penglibatan dalam membuat keputusan pembelian atau tahap penglibatan dan kepentingan dalam pembuatan keputusan. Dapatan kajian juga mendapati lima kriteria utama yang digunakan oleh pelajar semasa memilih universiti ialah kemudahan pembelajaran di universiti, penempatan kerjaya, program pengajian yang ditawarkan, keselamatan dalam kampus, dan kaitan program dengan kerjaya yang dipilih. Dapatan kajian ini amat berguna kepada pihak universiti terutama kepada pemarkas pendidikan dan juga pembuat dasar untuk merangka kempen pemasaran dan aktiviti promosi yang lebih berkesan untuk menarik pelajar memilih universiti tersebut.

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LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| FIPHE | Factors Influencing the Pursuit of Higher Education |
| IPTA | Public Higher Learning Institution |
| IPTs | Private Higher Learning Institution |
| PCPCU | Perceived Criteria for Preference in Choosing University |
| SNC | Students' Work Ethic |
| SSE | Students' Subjective Expertise |
| SSII (Informational) | Students' Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (Informational) |
| SSII (Normative) | Students' Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (Normative) |
| SSK | Students' Subjective Knowledge |
| STPM | Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia |
| SUO | Students' Uncertainty Orientation |
| SWE | Students' Work Ethic |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Consumer behavior is the study of the decision-making units and the processes involved in acquiring, consuming, and disposing of goods, services, experiences, and ideas (Mowen, 1995). In running those activities, consumers are constantly faced with the need to make decisions. For example, every consumer at one point in time will have to choose from different products and services, model and brands, from different styles and sizes, from the different stores, and so on.

Recognition of the importance of consumer behavior has led numerous researches to examine the factors that influence a consumer's choice more closely. Numerous studies conducted by scholars within this field have pointed out that a combination of the cognitive, motivational, and affective processes underlie every consumer's decision (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994). These processes are greatly influenced by the interplay of three factors (Assael, 1992). The first factor, known as the internal factor, relates to the individual's need, perceptions, and attitudes. Additionally, the consumer's demographic characteristics, life-style, and personality traits may also influence his/her decision. The other two remaining factors, categorized as external factors, are environmental influences and marketing strategies respectively. Environmental influences include culture, social class, face-to-face groups, and situation. Marketing strategies, on the other hand,

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